

News from Ed Markey

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May 8, 2003

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CHINA'S SARS COVER UP SHOULD BE LINKED TO MEMBERSHIP IN WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Markey: Public Health and Global Trade Are Inseparable

Washington, DC: Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the House Energy and Commerce and Homeland Security Committees, today released a letter to President Bush urging him to address the Chinese cover up of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Health Organization (WHO), and make clear the need to link public health and trade in international commerce. The Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection held a hearing today on the Free Trade Agreements with Chile and Singapore. Rep. Markey informed the representatives from the United States Trade Representatives office of his concerns on this matter.

Rep. Markey said, "I have written the President today to urge him to bring to the forefront of global trade discussions China's cover up of the SARS public health crisis. While the first cases of SARS were in November 2002, China denied that its country was unsafe for travel and commerce as late as April 28, 2003. China also hid SARS patients and other information from World Health Organization doctors and officials despite thousands of cases spreading worldwide and hundreds of global fatalities. Refusing to impair their own economy during Chinese New Year celebrations, China has impaired global trade and public health in a still immeasurable way."

The letter to President Bush states:

1. The WTO Agreement provides for the protection of human or animal life or health from diseases carried by plants or animals, but this protection must be extended to human transmission of diseases.
2. In no area of the WHO's guiding principles can the Chinese government's five month cover up of SARS be seen as acceptable in responding to the outbreak of SARS.

"Global trade demands that public health be protected and responses to threats to public health be transparent and rapid. Public health epidemics are also global trade epidemics," Rep. Markey concluded.

Rep. Markey's letter can be found at www.house.gov/markey.

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